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RR RUEHDBU RUEHPW RUEHSL
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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5640
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS KABUL 000590

DEPARTMENT FOR SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/A, EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO AID FOR ASIA/SCAA
USFOR-A FOR POLAD

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: OPERATION MOSHTARAK - SITUATIONAL REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 16,
2010

REF: (A) KABUL 582, (B) KABUL 567, (C) KABUL 554, (D) KABUL 543,
(E) KABUL 466, (F) KABUL 115, (G) 09 KABUL 4187

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Operations in Nad Ali District continued on February 16, as ISAF continued to find high numbers of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the operational area. Governor Mangal attended a security shura today to look at Nad Ali security, and he traveled to Camp Bastion to visit three civilian casualties, injured by the Taliban. At the request of the Director of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), Governor Mangal also agreed to reschedule the launch of the Nad Ali Stabilization Plan, originally set for February 18. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) As operations in Nad Ali district proceed, ISAF forces continued to encounter large numbers of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and foreign fighters, especially in northern Marjah. The provincial and district governments remain heavily engaged in preparations to move forward with development and governance efforts once Operation Moshtarak is closed. This is a situational update for the happenings in Nad Ali district for February 16, 2010.

POLITICAL UPDATE

¶3. (SBU) Helmand Governor Mangal hosted a security shura attended by Minister of Interior Atmar, Minister of Defense Wardak, and RC-S Commander MG Carter (UK) in Lashkar Gah to examine the current security situation of Nad Ali and to look ahead to future security measures. Although no major decisions were made, reports indicate that the shura was well received.

¶4. (SBU) Mangal, along with Nad Ali Deputy District Governor (covering Marjah) Haji Zahir and a number of Afghan press, traveled to the medical ward at Camp Bastion to visit three civilian casualties injured by Taliban forces in northern Marjah.

MEDIA UPDATE

¶5. (SBU) In international reporting, questions are being raised about the civilian casualty incident on Sunday. Although NATO forces claimed responsibility for a rocket attack that killed 12 civilians, American officers Monday were quoted anonymously in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and McClatchy as maintaining that the rocket had hit the compound it was intended to hit, and suggested the Taliban may have been using human shields.

¶6. (SBU) The international media was also dominated by reports of the capture in Pakistan of the Afghan Taliban's top military commander, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. However, as the operations progress, questions from journalists are also turning to the next phases of Operation Moshtarak: governance capacity building and development. In an interview with CNN, PRT USAID Team Lead stated, "Even influential elders who we honestly didn't think would be

supportive are aligning themselves with us. They see the work everyone has done in other areas of Helmand and are looking to seeing those benefits too."

DEVELOPMENT

17. (SBU) The Nad Ali Stabilization Plan launch, which was scheduled for February 18, has been rescheduled for a later date since Minister Popal, Minister for the Independent Directorate for Local Governance, cannot attend on the original date. Governor Mangal has requested that the launch be moved to next week, date to be determined.

18. (SBU) Reports from Nad Ali indicate that many culverts and roads have been badly damaged due to IEDs, and the PRT is looking for ways to assess the damage and send repair teams to fix the damages.

IDP UPDATE

19. (SBU) As of February 16, the Helmand Department of Refugees and Repatriation reports that a total of 1354 families have registered in Lashkar Gah, with 129 registered today. Of this total, 628 families have asked for humanitarian assistance, such as ration cards and supplies.

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